

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

In the Museum of the Woods

I spent just shy of a week covering the Duxbury Art Association's Winter Juried show and that is nothing compared to all the time the organizers put into this endeavor which is strictly to promote the arts. The one aspect of the show that I would like to focus on is the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury where the show was and still is being exhibited. This is the type of place that a town resident can pass by a thousand times and wonder, "what's that?" But once visited, one will be drawn back again and again. Much like crossing Powder Point Bridge or going up to the monument. Once just isn't enough.

The first thing I had to do was figure out what was what. Try this pop quiz?

1. Where is the Ellison center?
2. Where is the Art Complex Museum, which is privately funded by the Weyerhaeuser foundation?
3. Where is the Duxbury Art Association that relies on public funding located?
4. Do you feel that I have an art complex?
5. What Art Association is located in the Old Catholic Church on St. George Street?
6. Can it be confusing for the Duxbury Art Association to have a show at the Art Complex Museum on Alden Street, if they make their home in the Ellison Center located on St. George Street where the Old Catholic church used to be?

7. Am I dating myself by calling the big beach, the big beach? (For McGarigal).

8. Is it wrong to enjoy dating oneself?

The one thing the Art Complex Museum doesn't have is a complex about its mission. It's academic. The Weyerhaeuser family wanted to create a center where people of all ages could come, and not only look at art, but also, to learn and appreciate it from many views. The intent is to maximize the pleasure of the 13 acre property with sculpture on the grounds and in the trees (see the really cool metal shark outside the main building's entrance). In addition, the family took the opportunity to construct this main building as a work of art itself.

This building, which I feel was designed with integrity, houses the administrative offices, several galleries, and an extensive reference library. It is mainly glass and wood playing on its position located in a wooded area. The roofline is said to mimic Duxbury's big beach's waves. It is a contemporary building whose design still holds true today, rather than feeling dated.

At a gallery tour on last Sunday, I was speaking with Duxbury resident and Rotarian, Charles Weyerhaeuser, who heads this gem of an organization, and he cleared up the flow of the property for me. I had asked him about the tea ceremonies that I had read about last summer in the Clipper, and he pointed to a house along the drive where the tea hut is presently located. He also mentioned that the next house down on the corner is where classes are held in the museum's educational studios.

The gallery tour was led by curator's Catherine Mayes and Craig Bloodgood who expertly, yet also quite comfortably, led our random group of about 25 people through

several of the pieces in the Duxbury Art Association's winter show. This was my third time through the show, as I mentioned last week that I had the privilege to work as volunteer on jury day. I was with three fellow artists Erik Strom, Scott Chase, and Jack Shea moving the art that was not accepted into the show back to the Ellison Center (home of the DAA). We all agreed that it was quite a magical experience having the opportunity to be around all that creation. When I mentioned to Mayes how much I had enjoyed that experience, she confided in me that in her almost three decades in the field it hasn't gotten any easier to have to turn artist's work down. In her words, "it can be really agonizing." She said that often it is about having a set of criteria that the work doesn't meet for that particular place and time, rather than being about the quality of the work itself.

My second look at the show was at the gala cocktail party last Saturday, which is an important fundraiser within the whole event. I have to admit that the artwork did not speak to me in the same way as it had before. This is mainly because the art was now competing with beautifully displayed food including a perfectly scandalous ham. Also, there were lovely young ladies passing trays, fresh cut tulips of an unusual shade of pink in elegant glass vases, and cool beverages being served by a chorus of handsome men in black fedoras before a backdrop of floor to ceiling graphite portraits.

Did I forget to mention all the mingling people and someone on the grand piano? The show / art that night was more like a theatrical stage set, and I admit that often I need to concentrate when looking at art (hey, when emptying the dishwasher). I find it whispers to me (the art not the dishes), and with the crush that was there, I just wasn't getting that particular vibe. But, the 'people watching' was exquisite.

Back to Sunday, I really enjoyed the tour. Curator's Bloodgood and Mayes are a great team as they contemplate from different angles. Bloodgood using more of the working man's approach and practical sensitivity to a piece of art, while Mayes compliments his raw nature with a profound and academic approach. They played off each other and were both smart and funny with some inside information as well. I was taken back to that magical place I had been when I had first had the opportunity to see all the work entered into the show. And I really learned a lot about what was in the artist's minds when producing their work, techniques that I had never heard of and how a show is judged.

It is wonderful that the Art Complex Museum is located in our town. It provides the Duxbury Art Association with the opportunity to hold this show in a formidable location adding to the thrill of the competition. If you have never checked out the museum, this might be just the ticket. Museum hours are 1-4pm Wednesday through Sundays. Groups are welcome and free guided tours are available (advance notice requested please). For more information on events, upcoming exhibitions and lectures please call (781) 934-6634 or visit them on the web at www.artcomplex.org.